

Brooklyn Jewish Center

Review

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New Year Greeting Section

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*The opinions expressed by the writers in these pages
are not necessarily those of the Review.*

ABOUT THE COVER...

The plaque that is shown was made of brass, with silver and wood, in Europe in the 19th Century. It was given as a legacy by the Danzig Jewish Community in 1939 to the Jewish Museum, which is permitting the Review to reproduce it. The plaque was put on display during Rosh Hashanah and represents the Order of Sounding of the Shofar.

WINDOWS IN THE HEAVENS

by Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal

In connection with the Biblical account of the world's creation, as told in the first page of the Book of Genesis, an ancient Rabbi adds a beautiful comment that I feel has a particular message for all of us — indeed, for all the world today. He tells us that when God created the world “He installed in the heavens 365 windows which the world was to make use of — 182 windows in the east, 182 windows in the west, and one window in the center of the heavens.” It is a fanciful tale, of course, depicted in poetic imagery. But that is the way the old Rabbinic masters preferred to express deep truths which had eternal values.

If I were asked what the function is of these solemn days, beginning with Rosh Hashanah and concluding with Yom Kippur, I would say it is to open the window in the heaven above us — to catch a glimpse of the Divine and to make that vision penetrate and influence our lives. Note that this Rabbinic comment is found in the Talmudic tractate of Rosh Hashanah. Evidently that is the concept which the ancient sages had of the Jewish New Year. Ah, if all of us would heed this interpretation of Rosh Hashanah, how much more meaningful and how much more effective the observance of these solemn days would be!

But our text goes further — it has a universal message for all mankind. The world needs it as well as the Jews need it. “There are 182 windows in the east, and 182 windows in the west;” all men, of all lands, of all faiths, of all races, of all nationalities, have equal opportunities to open these windows in the heavens — giving everyone the privilege of beholding the Kingdom of the Father of all mankind. It is this universal note in the Rabbi's comment that makes it of special significance in our troublesome age. The vision of heaven is not limited to one nationality, to one color, or to one creed. The windows to the heavens are equally available to every human being on earth.

Our text, however, goes still further: “There are 365 windows in the heavens” — a window for every one of the 365 days in the year! Yea, how important this phase of the comment is. Every religion — Christian, Moslem, Buddhist and the countless others — as well as the Jewish — sponsors special days or seasons in which we are to cast our eyes heavenward and gaze through the windows, as it were, for a heavenly vision to inspire us in our paths or life

on earth. We gather in our respective Houses of Worship, and, lifting our eyes upward, peer through the window of heaven for the Divine inspiration that we find so essential in our earthly life.

But these occasions represent merely the heavenly glimpse through that one window which God had fixed in the very center of the heavens. Alas, with the passing of that special day when the worshippers leave their sanctuaries, the heavenly windows remain closed, and the heavenly inspiration is gone. That is the tragedy of the world. Our daily lives have no contact with the windows in the heavens, and the Divine plays no role in our everyday thoughts and deeds. This is the message needed by the peoples of the east and by the peoples of the west — by all mankind.

It is very interesting to note that at the conclusion of the Yom Kippur services, before the Shofar is sounded, the entire congregation rises and proclaims aloud the *Shema* — the affirmation of the belief in the unity of God — and this is followed by another affirmation: “The Lord, He is God,” which is repeated aloud seven times — to make clear to the Jew, as he is about to leave the Synagogue, that this declaration is not only for these sacred and solemn days, but also for every one of the seven days of every week that is to appear in the year to come.

What a happier world this would be if all men and women were to habituate themselves to open the windows in the heavens — and to look for their guidance and inspiration, not just when they assemble in their Church or Synagogue, but also in their homes, in their places of business, in office and in market place as well! We would then transport, verily, the heavenly ideals of truth and honor, of justice and righteousness, of love and peace, into our everyday lives, and thus stamp life on earth with the image of heaven.

If we Jews, and all the peoples of the world, would take to heart this lesson, if we would look upward, heavenwards, and daily open the windows to the Source whence cometh our help, then indeed would the coming year be not only a new year but also a happy year for us and for all mankind!

Editor's Note: This Rosh Hashanah message was delivered by the Rabbi on Station WOR, November 9, 1945, and is reprinted without change.

TORAH AND FLORA

*Rabbinical Thoughts
on Biblical Plants*

by Nathan Krinsky, M.D.

Ancient secular writings on the plants of the Bible date back as far as 413 BCE when Herodotus described Bible plants, and 332 BCE when Aristotle wrote on the subject. The first book, of which there is a record, that dealt entirely with plants mentioned in the Bible was that of Levinus Lemmens in 1566. In 1757 Carolus Linnaeus edited and published the findings of his student, F. Hasselquist. This was the first time in history that a writer on the natural history of the Bible had actually visited the Biblical lands, and there studied first hand the natural features of the region.

In this essay we shall not concern ourselves with the scientific identification, description or classification of the plants mentioned in the Bible. We shall leave that field of study to the trained botanists and natural historians with intimate knowledge of ancient Palestine and present-day Israel.

Very little, if anything, in my presentation is new or original. I have drawn material from many sources: My readings of the Bible, several texts on Biblical plants, the encyclopedias, and a great deal from the writings of Rabbi Louis I. Rabinowitz — who writes a column which I have been reading in the weekly issue of the International Jerusalem Post, since my first visit to Israel in 1970. He recently published a small volume with the title *Torah and Flora*, that of his column. It is to him that I owe my interest and desire to study the Biblical plants and the Rabbinical commentaries on them.

There is scarcely a Biblical plant to which the ancient Rabbis did not compare the Jewish people. This they did because of the specific characteristics shared by both and which they wished to emphasize at the time, providing parables, homilies, and symbolism affording moral or ethical lessons.

The Bible, aside from its deep religious significance, holds great interest because it tells so much about the everyday life, customs and beliefs of a people whose world has long since passed away. Throughout the Biblical writings that were slowly accumulated over a long period of time, certainly not less than a thousand years, there is constant reference to the trees, plants and flowers of the countryside. They formed an essential part of the life of the ancient Jews, and the Bible without its vineyards, olive groves and palm trees, lilies, roses and other plants, would be much less interesting and

would lose much of its contact with the life of the ordinary man.

The Talmud, next to the Bible, is the most important book in Jewish culture. It is a vast rabbinical library of Biblical and sacred material not included in the written Torah. The Talmud is held as the repository of thousands of years of Jewish wisdom — a conglomerate of law, legend and folk-lore; philosophy, a blend of unique logic and wise pragmatism; of history and science; anecdotes and humor. In total, it is Rabbinic literature to the close of the fifth century or early sixth century.

The Rabbis displayed a rich poetic and fertile imagination, especially in their interpretation of the phenomena of Nature. Though they were more concerned with the ethical and moral lessons to be derived from these phenomena, their sound botanic insight and wide knowledge of agricultural matters were truly astounding.

Mention of flora in the Bible is found in its early pages. In Genesis 1:11 we read "...And God said 'Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit tree bearing fruit after its kind'..." The vegetable kingdom or flora of the earth is thus mentioned under three heads: grass, herb, fruit tree. We read too, in Genesis 2:9 that... "Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to sight, and good for food." It is noteworthy that Rabbinic rulings in Talmudic times prohibited the cutting down of fruit trees, and only non-fruit bearing trees could be used as battering rams against the ramparts of enemy cities.

The passage "a land flowing with milk and honey" is mentioned about 19 times in the Bible. Honey, referring to the juice of the date palm, is mentioned about 49 times; bee honey only once. The date, just as the vine, the fig (which is mentioned 57 times), and the olive, was of vast importance to the ancient people, and as it is written "So sit under one's vine, and one's own fig tree" became the proverbial expression amongst the ancient Jews to denote peace and prosperity.

Noah planted a vineyard and made wine. The vine therefore is considered the first recorded *cultivated* plant. There must have been some kind of corn cultivated for we read of "fine meal," "bread," and "cakes" spoken of in the time of Abraham. "Lentils" and "wheat" are written about in the time of Jacob, and after this we find barley, which is the earliest grain to ripen in Israel, and which the Rabbis indicate was food for the poor. It was used also as an animal fodder. Rye, millet, beans, pulse (the edible seeds of

various leguminous crops), pomegranates, nuts, and several herbs are mentioned. There are also writings about several spicery or perfume plants.

King Solomon is mentioned as one who spoke of trees from the Cedar that is Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. It is said that King Solomon had all the plants that came under his observation catalogued and classified. He is therefore considered the first systematic botanist.

The Burning Bush, the identity of which is so much disputed and debated, was often taken as a symbol of the Jewish people by the Rabbis. They wrote that Israel was small and lowly amongst the nations; yet, like the Bush itself, it was indestructible... because of the "Divine spirit that dwelleth within its people."

The Talmudic Rabbis wrote of trees in many idioms, and applied their moral and ethical parables to the ancient Israelites. To the ancient Jewish people the Cedar of Lebanon was the most awe-inspiring tree. It was described as a tree of grandeur, majestic, and of great strength and dignity, and was called King of Trees. At the same time it was characterized symbolically as being haughty and arrogant, and was contrasted with the lowly hyssop, as well as with the bulrush and the reed which bend with the wind. These latter to the Rabbis symbolized *humility*. As one Rabbi said, "A man should always be humble as the reed and never unyielding as the Cedar, and it is on account of its humility that the reed has been chosen — that from *it* should be fashioned the quill with which the Torah is written."

This indicated one of the Holiest of honors!

In another reference to trees, we find in Job 14:7-9, "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down it will sprout again... Though the root thereof was old in the earth... yet through the scent of water it will bud, and put forth branches like a plant." Rabbinical writing actually applies this verse to Abraham and his descendants.

It is taught that all living things, in their way, must Extol and sing Praise to God. The Rabbis fantasized about the speech of trees and provided many parables. Why fruit-bearing trees loaded with fruit do not rustle or make as much noise as non-fruit bearing trees was a subject for discussion and a source for many stories. One such story related how non-fruit bearing trees said to the fruit-bearing trees, "Why is your voice not heard?" The answer given by the fruit-bearing trees was, "There is no need for us to acclaim ourselves. Our fruit speaks for

us." In turn, the fruit-bearing trees asked the non-fruit bearing trees, "Why do you find it necessary to make so much chatter?" And they replied, "If we did not, who would notice us?"

Good fruit, like good deeds, speak for themselves.

Genesis 8:11 reads, "And the dove came in to him at eventide, and lo, in her mouth an olive leaf freshly plucked." This indicated to Noah that the dove had reached shore and that the flood waters had receded. By using root derivations of the Hebrew words, "plucked leaf" came to mean "food"; and knowing that the olive tree was one of the most bitter of plants, the Rabbis interpreted the passage to mean, "Better the food which comes from the Holy One, Blessed be He, even though it is bitter, than the most succulent of dainties, if one is dependent on man for it."

In the same way the Rabbis interpreted the choice of the olive leaf as a symbol of the desire for freedom by the caged bird — and by the human being as well.

Genesis 6:12 informs us that the sins which brought about the Flood were widespread corruption and promiscuity. The Talmud writes that hybrid plants can be produced from the grafting (union) of all trees except the olive. These passages form the basis for the Talmudic lesson: "If the Torah had not been given to us we should have learned the value of chastity from the dove."

And so it is that the olive branch in Jewish tradition conveys not only the ideal of peace, but also the principles of the virtue of liberty and the restraint of the lusts of man.

Israel today grows millions of flowers and is considered one of the leading flower growers in the world. Export of flowers constitutes an important source of foreign currency. In the Bible there are only two flowers mentioned by name — what is said to be the rose, and the lily. By deduction, two others have been suggested: the narcissus and the anemone (not to be confused with our anemone). Definitive identification is still an uncertain matter.

The Rabbis tell of a king who had a beautiful orchard planted with rows of figs, vines, apples and pomegranates. The orchard was cared for by a hired man. On one occasion, when the king inspected the orchard, he found it neglected and overgrown with weeds. In his anger, he decided to have the whole area mowed down and destroyed. However, as this was being done, he noticed a rose lily among the weeds. He picked it up and was delighted by its fragrance and said,

"For the sake of this one flower, I will spare the whole orchard." In like manner, when God saw how man had spoiled the world, He determined to destroy it, but when the Jewish people accepted the Torah, He decided to spare the world as a whole.

The Carob tree is indigenous to Palestine and is a prominent tree in present-day Israel. The hush or outer coating of the fruit is supposed by some to have been the locust-like grasshopper that John the Baptist ate, together with honey, when he lived in the Wilderness. The name "St. John's Bread" is given to the fruit, or carob pods; in German the name is "Johanisbrot" and in Yiddish it is known as "Bokser."

The seeds of the Carob were formerly employed as standards of weight and are the source of the term "carat."

The Carob fruit was considered as the lowliest of foods, and was eaten only by the poor and used for animal feeding. By various translations of the root from which the word is derived, the Rabbis produced a passage which went something like this: If you obey the word of God, you shall eat the good of the land; if you fail to do so,

there will ensue dire consequences and you shall eat Carobs!

In Ecclesiastes 1:9 we find the oft quoted passage that "there is nothing new under the sun." The Talmud tells a tale which would indicate that our beloved story of Rip Van Winkle, written by Washington Irving who was born in New York City in 1783, and printed the story in 1819-1820, had its version in Talmudic writings. It relates how a young Rabbi once came upon an old man planting a Carob seed along a roadside. Laughed at by the Rabbi for planting a seed which would require at least 30 years to grow into a fruit-producing tree, by which time the planter would most surely be dead, the old man answered, "I am not planting for myself. I have eaten Carobs that other men have planted, so why may not I do the like for other men? The sons of my sons will eat of this and thank me." The Talmud relates that soon afterwards the Rabbi became tired and lay down in the woods to rest. He awoke seventy years later to find the Carob tree matured and bearing fruit, and himself an aged man totally unfamiliar to the people about him.

Inasmuch as this subject was first

presented at a "Symposium on Israel" at the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens on December 7, 1980, I would like to indicate at this time, as I did then, that this Talmudic tale must have influenced the Membership Committee of the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, for on its membership card is inscribed, "A man does not plant a tree for himself; he plants it for posterity."

Ecclesiastes and Talmud — informing us even unto this day!

Nathan Krinsky, M.D. is a physician who, until his recent retirement, practiced Medicine in Brooklyn for almost fifty years. He is Chairman of the Board of Governors of The Brooklyn Jewish Center. He admits to a life-long interest in plants, and at present is on the staff of the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens as a Volunteer Guide. In December 1980, he presented this subject at a "Symposium on Israel — The Twentieth Century Miracle," at the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. Recently he was a participant in a T.V. program on Channel 9-WOR in which he was shown conducting a tour of Senior Citizens at the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens.

LAW DAY MEDITATION

by Joseph Heller

Comes May 1 and our *New York Law Journal* devotes a section entitled, "Law Day '81: Law, the Language of Liberty." Many lawyers read the articles because we are part of the judicial system and would like to understand the Language of Liberty.

Comes the evening of May 1 and the radio announcers tell us about the guilty verdict reached in the case of Senator Williams, the last defendant in the Abscam inquiry. The announcer concludes with a statement that it was felt in certain quarters that "This time we did not allow the big fish to escape us."

Presumably man and fish are of the same species. So let's fry him until he gets good and crisp and then dispose of him. This may not follow were we to put to practice some of the statements made by our appellate judges in their articles in the Law Day section.

Lawrence H. Cooke, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, speaks: "There is a call for an appreciation of our form of government and our way of life so intimately linked with the rule of law. There is a call for an examination

of systems and procedures by which those principles and that form of government can be fortified and vitalized."

Milton Mollen, Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division, Second Department, speaks:

"I think it essential that from time to time we step back from the problems of the moment to reflect upon the deeper meaning of the system of laws under which we work and live."

Frances T. Murphy, Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department, speaks:

"The particular needs of our time and our City demand the New York Bar as a whole become more actively involved in our criminal justice system."

As I reviewed what I read Friday morning and heard Friday night, the meaning of Justice and Liberty becomes uncertain.

Does the language of liberty embrace an exception carved out of our criminal justice system, which permits artificially created or contrived offenses? Is

there justification for misconduct by agents of the prosecuting office who entice targets into crimes they were never predisposed to commit? In a moment of weakness, man speaks when reason dictates silence. Abscam methods were not legitimate by standards of Liberty Language.

Comes May 2, Saturday morning: It is my custom to attend services at my synagogue. There I meditate and pray. The events of yesterday haunted me. What kind of system of law do we live under? Was the procedure followed (in Abscam cases) proper or sanctioned?

What, if anything, can the Bible contribute to my thinking? As though it were a providential occurrence, we read Leviticus XIX — A Manual of Moral Instructions — "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people."

The commentators discuss the meaning "go up and down as a talebearer, lit: go up and down as a pedlar." (Bible)

"This expressive idiom is here applied to a person who travels about dealing in scandal and malicious hear-

say, getting the secrets of people and retailing them wherever he goes." (Rashi)

"A mischievous business, even if the report is true and told without malice." (Maimonides)

"A more despicable character exists not; such a person is a pest to society, and should be exiled from the habitation of men." (Adam Clarke)

"The calumniator is worse than a murderer, since he destroys a man's reputation, which is more precious than his life." (Talmud)

"Hence the informer was deemed, the most abandoned creature among all evil-doers to their kind." (The Pentateuch, by W. Hertz, 2nd Ed. 501)

Comes Saturday afternoon and I still feel disturbed.

I soon repaired to the New York County Lawyers' Association Library in quest of a Supreme Court decision which dealt with an analogous situation, i.e. perjury, entrapment and the unfairness of our administration of justice.

Mr. Justice Jackson in *Krulewitch v. U.S.*, 336 U.S. 442, said:

"The unavailing protest of courts against the growing habit to indict for conspiracy in lieu of prosecuting for the substantive offense itself constitutes a serious threat to fairness to our administration of justice."

In this case the prosecuting authorities initiated a perjury indictment by getting a witness to answer four questions before a grand jury in one way and the defendant having answered the same questions in another way, and so the answers were at variance. The prosecuting attorney decided whose testimony to credit for indictment purposes.

Obviously no crime had been committed by the Senator before the conspirators set up a meeting with fictitious persons. It was they, the plotters, with the cooperation of law enforcement people, who hatched a plot and sowed it with the seeds of sin.

In the words of Justice Jackson: "The offense was contrived, hatched up and generated by an innovative procedure."

"Every person objects to a practice whereby man is confronted by man for the purpose of jeopardizing his liberty.

This form of creating non-legislative offenses should be judicially dispelled."

Comes Saturday night: I am exhausted, a little refreshed after reading Mr. Justice Jackson's opinion, a little more resolved and strengthened by the quoted portion of the Bible.

After fifty five years of law practice, office, trials, appeals, some writings, I was saying to Mrs. Heller, "Maybe at the age of eighty-one, I feel the injustices are too much of a burden for me to endure or help solve." But she rightfully said, "You have a mistress in the law, which has a stranglehold on you, which will not be released until the days of your life have come to an end."

And so tomorrow I will probably say, "Mourn not, weep not at a time like this, nor bow your head in time of stress; redouble your toil, repair and cast up the highway of Freedom."

Editor's Note: The foregoing is a letter that Mr. Heller wrote to the Editor of The New York Law Journal which published it on May 11, 1981.

THE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL AND THE RETURN TO ZION

by Rabbi Mordecai H. Lewittes

The Rosh Hashanah celebration in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah was one of the most significant occasions in the history of the Jewish people. It is estimated that this celebration occurred in the year 445 B.C.E.

In 536 B.C.E., the exiles had been permitted by Cyrus the Great to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple. The Hebrew Bible, in fact, ends with the words of Cyrus' proclamation:

"Thus saith Cyrus, King of Persia. All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, the God of heaven given me; and He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all His people — the Lord his God be with him — let him go up!" (2 Chronicles, 36)

Those who returned under the leadership of Prince Zerubbabel were ecstatic. They sang the words of the Psalmist: "When God restored the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." But the obstacles to rebuilding were great and twenty years

passed before the second Temple was erected.

The Golden Menorah

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah urged the people to complete their sacred tasks — the rebuilding of the Temple and of Zion. Zechariah's vision of the golden Menorah inspired the builders:

"In my dream," Zechariah said, "an angel appeared to me in the rebuilt Temple."

"What do you see?" asked the angel.

"I see a beautiful shining Menorah," replied the prophet. "It is made of glittering gold. And the candlestick has seven lamps, each drawing oil from a central source. Near the Menorah, stand two olive trees. A beautiful light shines from the Menorah and the golden candlestick glitters."

"The Temple will again spread light to all mankind," said the angel, "just as this Menorah spreads light. And just as this Menorah draws its sustenance from an unseen source, so, too, Israel

will draw its strength from an unseen source — from God. Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, says the Lord of hosts."

"And what is the meaning of the two olive trees?" asked the prophet.

"These are the two leaders, Prince Zerubbabel and Jeshua the High Priest who will finish the work of restoration. Nothing will stand in their way."

The Temple was indeed rebuilt but as the years passed the problems grew more and more severe.

Ezra and Nehemiah

Two generations after the completion of the Temple, 1600 additional Jews returned to Jerusalem from Babylon under the leadership of Ezra the Scribe. He found chaos — the people were weak and defenseless, farmers were in debt and their children often enslaved, intermarriage was rife and the Torah was neglected. He struggled to make the Torah the supreme law of the land.

Nehemiah, appointed governor of

Jerusalem by the King of Persia, reinforced Ezra's efforts. Nehemiah was dismayed when he inspected the city and its weakened defenses. The wall around Jerusalem was almost leveled to the ground; the gates leading into the city were burnt by fire; roads were obstructed. The city was in ruins.

Nehemiah assigned each family a special task. Half of the men were armed with swords, shields, bows and arrows, and spears. The other half were engaged in building, but they, too, carried swords at their sides.

Every 500 feet, stood a man with a shofar. At the sounding of the ram's horn, builders would leave their work and rush to assist those who were being attacked. Thus, with a tool in one hand and a sword in the other, the Jews continued to build.

Inside the wall Nehemiah built a strong fortress. The gates of Jerusalem were shut and barred every night; each guard took turns in watching the gates which were not opened until the next morning when the sun was hot. On the Sabbath merchants were not permitted to enter to sell their wares.

Meanwhile, there was a great outcry because of the lack of food caused by drought. Farmers mortgaged their fields and houses. When they could not repay their creditors, they were forced to sell their daughters as servants to pay their debts.

Nehemiah angrily called together princes, nobles and rich landowners.

"You have violated the Torah," warned Nehemiah. "Instead of helping your brothers in need you have taken their children as slaves. Free those who have been sold as servants. Return unto the poor their fields and houses and cattle. Lend them food without demanding interest. This is what our Torah commands us to do."

The nobles and wealthy farmers agreed to restore property and to lend seed and food without exacting forbidden interest. Nehemiah succeeded in carrying through what might almost be termed a peaceful social revolution.

The hostile Samaritans who had previously overthrown what the Jews had built were dismayed. They now resorted to strategy. Sanballat, Samaritan leader, invited Nehemiah to a peace conference, planning to seize him and kill him. But Nehemiah, aware of the plot, refused to meet the Samaritans. Sanballat then accused the Jews of rebelling against Persia, but Nehemiah refuted his accusations.

At last after two years the wall was finished and Sanballat knew that his designs had come to naught.

The Holiday Celebrations

When Rosh Hashanah arrived the people gathered in Jerusalem to observe the New Year and to celebrate. This is the account found in the Bible:

"And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in their cities, all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spoke unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the Law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose... And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people — for he was above all the people — and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered: 'Amen, Amen,' with the lifting up of their hands; and they bowed their heads, and fell down before the Lord with their faces to the ground... Even the Levites caused the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. And they read in the book, in the Law of God distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people: 'This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep.' For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said unto them: 'Go your way, feast and drink the sweet and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye grieved; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'

So the Levites stilled all the people, saying: 'Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.' And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

And on the second day were gathered together the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, the priests and

the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to give attention to the words of the Law. And they found written in the Law, how that the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month; and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying: 'Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and branches of wild olive, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.'

So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the House of God, and in the broad place of the water gate, and in the broad place of the gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come back out of the captivity made booths, and dwelt in the booths; for since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun, unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness." (Nehemiah 8)

Indeed, there was cause for rejoicing. Jerusalem had been fortified and rebuilt, the poor had been redeemed, and the people had entered into a new covenant to obey the Torah. No wonder there was very great gladness!

TEACH THEM AND THEY WILL LEARN

To the young, a quarter of a century is an eternity and you've got to be a hoary old man to live that long. They learn that this is a misconception that gradually is dispelled as our youth grow on in years and are succeeded by new young who think as they did.

Thus, to say that our Mishna Class is going to celebrate its long-awaited Silver Jubilee, is typical of the truism expressed. When we called for a group to meet one Sunday morning at the Center for breakfast and a discussion on the formation of the Class, little did we realize that we were forging a new link in the everlasting chain for the study of Torah.

At first we aimed too low, as circumstances developed that morning. We thought that only a few persons would be

interested. But, we were gratified when a large turnout brought many who were ready and willing to plunge into the study of Mishna.

Mr. Abraham W. Slepian, who had sparked the idea along with some others, had asked Rabbi Benjamin Z. Kreitman to lead such a class. When the people appeared and said here we are — what do you plan?

We did present a form of study that would bring the Mishna to many men and women who couldn't follow a discussion of this branch of the Torah in Yiddish, as many of us encountered both at the Center and in many other institutions. It was a custom to study Mishna between Mincha and Maariv Services in most congregations. At the Center, this study was given by our venerable Rabbi Donner, who had taught a class every Saturday afternoon.

Now we were going to have a group meet every Sunday morning. Services would be first held, followed by

breakfast. Then the class would convene around the huge refectory tables that were a feature of our social rooms. We didn't expect much more than a minyan. As I said, we aimed too low. More than the minyan did come and we accommodated everyone.

Rabbi Kreitman presented the subject in a general manner to acquaint these students what was involved. He suggested various tests, such as Blackman, Canon Danby and others. We opted for Blackman as it retained the Hebrew text and had an English translation and notes.

There were men and women and a sprinkling of children of some of the members. We thrived that first year and showed the skeptics that we could do it. Not only did we, but through publicity and word of mouth, the Class grew in size and has continued to this day. Rabbi Haymovitz took over the cudgels when Rabbi Kreitman left, and now it has become the province of Rabbi Bloch.

A group such as ours required a little more formality, so Mr. Slepian became its first Chairman. When he tired, Abe Lindenbaum took over until his death, and now Ben Moskowitz is the leader. But the party at the head is not enough. The breakfasts required arrangements and Abe Micheliman, followed by Isaac Franco, took over along with a number of others who pitched in. Betty Marks became its Secretary and I have been blessed all these years as Treasurer. We do this work as a pleasurable event and enjoy the give and take that takes place.

There is much to say about this Class, which is now known as the Mishna Fellowship. You'll hear more about it soon, when we hold our Silver Anniversary affair and plan to begin our twenty-sixth year of study. If you haven't tasted Torah before, now is a good time to begin.

Louis Kramer

□□

KOHELET

(Ecclesiastes)

by Rabbi Abraham P. Bloch

The words of Kohelet, royal scion
Heir to power and riches great;
My fame, people proclaim in Zion
And laud the fortunes of my fate.

Yet wealth and power I disdain,
An honest preacher I'd rather be
And preach of sunshine and of rain
Or rue man's foolish vanity.

The rivers empty into the sea
Yet never, never, cease to run;
Whatever was, will ever be
There is nothing new under the sun.

Rich and poor, wise and fool
A common fate is their end,
All are subject to one rule
All must leave kin and friend.

A time to be born, a time to die,
A time to mourn, and a time to dance,
A time to laugh, a time to cry,
A time to end and a time to chance.

Some engage in competition
A silly race pursuing wealth,
Seeking endless acquisition
Undermining their very health.

Better far is man's contentment
A handful of quiet and of peace,
Than provoke a friend's resentment
And toil, and toil, without surcease.

The lover of silver finds no rest
He can never have his fill,
A laborer truly slumbers best
His days are busy, his nights are still.

A good man is better than oil
The day of death than day of birth,
What comes from earth returns to soil
And mourning follows after mirth.

A bit of sadness improves the heart
And leads the mind to contemplation,
Accept rebukes of the smart
And reject fools' commendation.

Patience is an admirable trait
Worthier than empty pride,
Obnoxious is an angry state
For anger in fools' bosoms hides.

The wheel of justice never halts
It grinds for wicked and for saint,
Piety does not cover faults
No human is free of taint.

Seek your happiness, live in hope
Life is the greatest of all prizes
Broad as the ocean is its scope
Death ends all enterprises.

Eat thy bread, make merry with wine,
Select your garments with great care,
Groom your hair with oil so fine
Enjoy life with your lady fair.

The swift do not always win a race
The strong not always win a war,
The skilled not always find grace,
The wise not always at riches' door.

Curse no king in thy innermost mind
Or in the privacy of thy bed;
If security you wish to find
Upon the waters cast thy bread.

Rejoice, young man, in youth
and strength,
Remember your debt to your creator,
Before the shadows grow in length
Praise Him now and pray for later.

Editor's Note: Ecclesiastes is traditionally read on Sabbath Chol-Hamoed Sukkot.

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*extend their fervent wishes to all
for a New Year of Peace and Health...*

*and
in loving memory, on these High Holy Days,
her family and dear friends fondly remember*

SARAH H. KUSHNER

A woman of valor...

In Memory of
Mrs. Rose G. Meislin

From her family

To The Members Of
The Brooklyn Jewish Center

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From his Loving Wife,
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*and second, to all the
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